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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
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AF/S FOR S.HILL  
INR/I FOR RODNEY HUFF  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B.PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2012

TAGS: [PINR](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MUGABE'S PRIEST, FATHER FIDELIS MUKONORI

REF: SECSTATE 80907

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Glenn Warren under 1.4 (c)

[1](#)1. (C) This message responds to a request for information regarding Father Fidelis Mukonori. The Embassy meets with Fidelis from time to time. We last saw him in July.

[1](#)2. (C) Father Fidelis has ties with President Mugabe and other senior ZANU-PF figures going back to the liberation struggle in the 1970s. He is from Mashonaland East and, like Mugabe, a Zezeru. He told us he was involved in brokering an end to the ZANU-ZAPU conflict in Matabeleland in the early 1980s and was involved in putting together the Unity Accord in 1987. He reportedly has served as a Mugabe emissary on other occasions--to white farmers in 2000 and to Morgan Tsvangirai in 2003 and 2006.

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[1](#)3. (C) Fidelis now meets irregularly with Mugabe; the last meeting was in March. At this point in time he does not travel with Mugabe. We are unaware if he also meets with Grace.

[1](#)4. (C) Fidelis discusses the state of Zimbabwe with Mugabe. He also discusses Mugabe's future. Fidelis believes it is time (or past time) for Mugabe to go, but told us an exit would have been easier 10 or 15 years ago. Now Mugabe is concerned about how he will spend the last years of his life should he leave politics and government. We don't know whether Mugabe asks for advice or whether Fidelis gives it. Our impression is that they have discussions, as old friends.

[1](#)5. (C) We're unaware of past rifts and/or disagreements between Mugabe and Fidelis.

[1](#)6. (C) Fidelis does not have his own church; he is the senior Jesuit in Zimbabwe.

[1](#)7. (C) Fidelis keeps his political views to himself, although as stated in para. 4, he believes Zimbabwe needs new leadership. He travels throughout the country and is no doubt aware of the economic situation. He intimated to us that he agreed with the substance of the Bishop's pastoral letter in April criticizing the government, but thought the tone could have been less accusatory and more subtle. Fidelis is on the board of St. George's College. Last year, when the government attempted to cap school fees for private institutions, he was not afraid to criticize and challenge the Ministry of Education.

[1](#)8. (C) Fidelis travels frequently. Within the last several

months, he has been in the U.S., Japan, and South Africa. We're unaware of particular relationships with church officials in South Africa.

19. (C) Fidelis regards himself as a conciliator and bridge builder. He would like to see better relations between the U.S. and Zimbabwe. We have explained U.S. policy to him, including the prospect of U.S. assistance, and he has said he would communicate this to Mugabe. At our meeting with him in July he said he would soon seek a meeting with Mugabe to talk about Mugabe's plans. We will follow up with Fidelis.

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